

Message Text

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63

ACTION ARA-10

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FM AMEMBASSY PANAMA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 4902

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PFOR, PN, PQ, US

SUBJECT: CANAL ZONE UNION LETTER TO AMBASSADOR BUNKER

AT MEETING BETWEEN CANAL ZONE UNION LEADERS AND EMBOFFS RELATING TO TREATY NEGOTIATIONS (SEPTTEL), JAMES J. O'DONNELL, PRESIDENT, LOCAL 14, AFGE (REPRESENTING LARGELY US EMPLOYEES OF CANAL COMPANY/CANAL ZONE GOVERNMENT) DISTRIBUTED COPIES OF OPEN LETTER OF AUGUST 20, 1975 WHICH HE HAD ADDRESSED TO AMBASSADOR BUNKER. TEXT OF LETTER WAS CARRIED IN FULL BY ENGLISH-LANGUAGE STAR & HERALD FRIDAY, AUGUST 22. FULL TEXT FOLLOWS: BEGIN QUOTE: DEAR MR. BUNKER: I WOULD LIKE TO TAKE THIS OPPORTUNITY TO EXTEND TO YOU LOCAL 14'S SUPPORT IN ESTABLISHING AND MAINTAINING THE DESIRED RELATIONSHIP OUR COUNTRY SEEKS WITH THE REPUBLIC OF PANAMA. WITH THE RAGING DEBATE THAT IS GOING ON IN THE REPUBLIC OF PANAMA AND THE UNITED STATES, IT APPEARS THAT MANY INFLUENTIAL PEOPLE SEEM TO BE LOSING SIGHT OF THE CONCERNS OF THE FEDERAL EMPLOYEE ON THE ISTHMUS.

THE PRIMARY CONCERN OF MEMBERS OF LOCAL 14 IS THE CONTINUED WHITTLED AWAY OF RIGHTS AND BENEFITS THAT AFFECT OUR WORKING AND LIVING CONDITIONS. ANOTHER CONCERN IS THE TOTAL ABSENCE OF ANY EFFECTIVE PROCEDURE

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FOR COMMUNICATING WITH GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS IN REGARD TO

JOB PROTECTIONS. I AM NOT AN EXPERT IN THE POLITICAL FIELD, BUT I DO KNOW THAT UNLESS EMPLOYEES ARE PROVIDED WITH APPROPRIATE ASSURANCES FROM GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS NEGOTIATING A NEW TREATY, IT WILL AFFECT ADVERSELY THE EMPLOYEES MORALE, LIVING AND FAMILY CONDITIONS, AS WELL AS THE EFFICIENCY AND PRODUCTIVITY OF OUR MEMBERS ON THE JOB. WE ARE ALL EXTREMELY CONCERNED OVER THE LIMITED NEWS REPORTS AND RUMORS CONCERNING OUR WELFARE. HAVING NO INFORMATION TO THE CONTRARY, WE VIEW WITH GREAT APPREHENSION THE FACT THAT NO SAFEGUARDS HAVE BEEN INTRODUCED IN CONGRESS TO PROTECT THE SECURITY AND WELFARE OF THE CANAL ZONE WORKER. WE HAVE XREN READING THE NEWS ACCOUNTS CONCERNING THE NEGOTIATIONS AND AS FAR AS WE KNOW, NEITHER SIDE HAS COME UP WITH AN ADEQUATE ANSWER AS TO WHAT SHOULD BE DONE FOR THE EMPLOYEES: IN VIEW OF THE LIMITED TIME AVAILABLE, I ASK THAT YOU GIVE SERIOUS CONSIDERATION TO THE FOLLOWING SEVEN POINTS,

1. ANY EMPLOYEE OF THE MILITARY AGENCIES OR THE PANAMA CANAL CO./CANAL ZONE GOVERNMENT WHO IS SUBJECT TO THE CIVIL SERVICE RETIREMENT LAW AND WHO BECOMES ABSOLUTELY SEPARATED FROM EMPLOYMENT FOR ANY REASON OTHER THAN MISCONDUCT OR DELINQUENCY SHALL BE CONSIDERED AS INVOLUNTARILY SEPARATED WITHIN THE MEANING OF THE CIVIL SERVICE RETIREMENT LAW AND SHALL BE ELIGIBLE TO RETIRE WITH 15 YEARS OF SERVICE, REGARDLESS OF AGE, WITH NO LOSS OF ANNUITY OR REDUCTION BECAUSE OF AGE.

2. EXTRA CREDIT OF ONE YEAR SERVICE FOR EACH FIVE YEARS TOTAL GOVERNMENT SERVICE.

3. PROVISION FOR A MINIMUM RETIREMENT BENEFIT OF 50 PERCENT OF SALARY AT THE TIME OF RETIREMENT.

4. COVERAGE FOR THOSE WHO LOSE THEIR JOBS IN CHANGES MADE IN ANTICIPATION OF THE TREATY, AS WELL AS AFTER THE TREATY BECOMES EFFECTIVE.

5. THE UNITED STATES GOVERNMENT TO PROVIDE PLACEMENT ASSISTANCE IN FEDERAL POSITIONS IN THE UNITED STATES

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FOR WHICH THEY MAY BE QUALIFIED BY EXPERIENCE AND TRAINING THOSE EMPLOYEES WHO ARE UNITED STATES CITIZENS AND WHO ARE INVOLUNTARILY SEPARATED AT ANY TIME FROM EMPLOYMENT BECAUSE OF THE TREATY.

6. CONTINUATION OF RECOGNITION OF UNITED STATES LABOR UNIONS AND UNITED STATES LABOR STANDARDS.

7. PROVISION OF EQUAL OPPORTUNITY FOR BOTH UNITED STATES
AND PANAMANIAN CITIZENS TO JOB OPENINGS AND PROMOTIONS ON
THE ISTHMUS.

I WOULD LIKE TO REQUEST THAT DURING YOUR STAY
IN PANAMA, ORGANIZED LABOR BE PERMITTED TO MEET WITH
YOU AGAIN, AND THAT WE HAVE A CHANCE TO FULLY PRESENT
OUR VIEWS. WE WOULD LIKE THE OPPORTUNITY TO DISCUSS
IN GREATER DETAIL OUR MUTUAL PROBLEMS. MY REQUEST
IS JUSTIFIED AND WITHIN REASON, BECAUSE IN MY VIEW,
THERE IS NOTHING IN THE CANAL ZONE MORE IMPORTANT TO
THE UNITED STATES THAN THE WELFARE OF THE EMPLOYEES,
AND THE GUARANTEE OF THAT CONTINUED WELFARE. I AM
LOOKING FORWARD TO MEETING WITH YOU DURING YOUR STAY
IN PANAMA. SINCERELY, JAMES J. O'DONNELL
PRESIDENT, LOCAL 14, AFGE UNQUOTE.
JORDEN

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